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ABSTRACT

This paper approaches the concept of collaboration by using a workshop format in three segments: (1) a puzzle to solve, (2) lessons on collaboration learned from solving the puzzle, and (3) a tabular overview of the fundamental differences between universities and school districts which hinder collaboration. After participants have formed teams to solve a geometric puzzle without verbal communication, they are queried about emerging leaders, common goals, attitudes, communication and participation problems, resolution of differences, and other group experiences. These questions and their answers constitute the lessons on collaboration. Salient research examples accompany most lesson explanations. Next, collaboration is defined. It is noted that collaborators do not have to know or like each other, and that knowledge itself could not exist without collaboration on symbols and their meanings. Organizations usually collaborate only after their leaders conclude that success is impossible separately. A three-page table summarizes differences in research emphasis, control, policy-making, learning paradigms, personnel matters, commitment levels, funding, status, and other areas that hinder university-school district collaboration. Cooperative planning is important to education and mandates improvement of college-school relations. Included are 24 references. (MLH)

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Research on Collaboration: Why it Works in Some Places and Not in Others

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Introduction

Today we will learn more about the concept of collaboration by using a unique technique. The format of this workshop will be broken into three segments: 1 - a puzzle to solve; 2 - lessons on collaboration learned from solving the puzzle, with supporting research; and, finally 3 - a look at the fundamental differences between universities and school districts which hinder collaboration.

Activity and Format

First, would you please get into groups of say five or six. Now each group will receive a set of five, various shaped geometric figures.

Your instructions are to:

A) Place the five pieces together so that they form a perfect square.

B) Please do not talk during this exercise.

Now, what have we learned as a result of working jointly on the puzzle?

Lessons on Collaboration

1. Did a leader emerge?

Collaboration is dependent on administrative support on two levels. On the one hand, one has to realize that administrative support is essential to successful collaboration. (Evans, 1968; Martorana, 1961; Moore, 1965; Wilbur, 1984). These writers emphasize the importance of administrative support at the top. However, besides support from the highest echelon of each organization, several crucial factors should be considered when selecting the person who will head the collaborative effort. (Sarason, 1971;

Wu, 1984). For example, the person heading the effort should possess strong human relation skills, be an extrovert, and possess prior public school teaching experience.

2. Did a common goal exist?

Your group had a common goal - that is solving the puzzle. Likewise, in order for collaboration to succeed the different organizations must have mutual goals. An organization contemplating involvement in a joint enterprise should clarify its own objectives and priorities and use these to determine with which other organizations it will join forces (Drummond and Baker, 1974). Indeed, collaboration is difficult to obtain when different organizations come with different agendas (Gallegas, 1980). In addition, Ladd (1969) noted that the process of giving up old ways of doing things and working out new ways may inhibit the initiation of cooperative activities.

3. What was your attitude when you were informed that you had a puzzle to solve?

Some, who enjoy puzzles, were perhaps excited. Others, one would suspect, were unhappy. In any event, your attitude toward solving puzzles determined, to a large degree, the amount of effort you were willing to expend on the project. Reed (1977) noted that the attitudes of institutional members toward collaboration and their support of institutional cooperative efforts will have a bearing on the success of the efforts.

4. Was it difficult communicating with each other?

Establishment of an adequate intra and interinstitutional communication network will facilitate collaboration (Baker, 1974; Wu, 1982; Moore, 1965). Having an effective channel of communication allows one to know who will talk

to whom and on what matters. Communication channels also provides a means for resolving conflicts which otherwise could be destructive.

During the time you were attempting to solve the puzzle you were instructed not to talk in order to emphasize the importance of communications to the collaborative process.

5. Did you feel as equals as you solved the problem?

Perhaps not, solely due to the fact that some people are more proficient in solving puzzles than others; and, in some cases, you have people who derive more enjoyment from solving puzzles. In order, however, for collaboration to be successful, the different institutions have to be perceived as equals. Clark (1975) writes that each party must contribute as equally as possible. But all people are not equal in ability in different areas, as indicated above - How is this resolved?

Collins (1971) states that the participants must be perceived as equals, but "equals with differentiated responsibilities and with accountability for different functions." Along the same view, Hite and Drummond (1975) describe the difference of equalities as the difference between political and operational level of collaboration. At the political level all participants are equal and all have an equal vote. At the operational level, however, some participants have more expertise in specific areas than others.

6. Did your group establish any rules of procedures?

In other words did the group decide that each person would have a chance to solve the puzzle or would one person move the pieces while the others made suggestions - nonverbally. Rules of procedure are important, for as Ladd (1969) had indicated, different institutions each have their own subculture

and ways of doing things. For example, we all know of cases where a project was terminated by a supervisor or administrator, who felt they were bypassed when the project was established. Knowing and understanding the customs of the other institution contributes greatly to successful collaboration.

7. Did your group work out a way to resolve differences?

Perhaps not, given the short time frame in which you were to complete your task (10 min.). Persons in one institution may misunderstand the other institutions capabilities, purposes, organizational procedures, behavior, customs, language or other subcultural characteristics (Ertell, 1957; Ladd, 1969, Paltridge, 1971). According to Tarence (1974), what is needed is an "arena" and "procedures in which conflicts can surface and be constructively continued or resolved. In addition, Reed (1977) noted that of all conflicts the one most destructive to collaboration is interpersonal conflict. Thus establishing a means for resolving conflicts, regardless if personal or institutional, will do much to enhance collaboration.

8. What was your role in solving the puzzle?

According to Futchs (1971), the clearer the roles, the stronger the "commitment and investment of self" (p. 9): In order to have a clear assessment of the roles, Davies and Aquino (1975) tell us that the suprasystems must honestly assess their own capabilities and the capabilities of the other collaborators.

A colleague at a sister university recently related his frustration at being assigned to work at a school district office for a year. When asked about the source of his frustration he replied, "Everything! I have no idea of who I should report to and I don't understand their [school system]

political system. It would have been helpful to have some guidance before being thrown in the lion's den."

9. Did you think small initially?

In other words, did you first try a few pieces, to see how they fit. In collaboration, it is important to start small. For in collaboration, as in any other endeavor, you need to have a feeling, at some point, of success - that you are getting something accomplished. Nahrstedt (1967) writes the success in the attainment of initial goals enhances the likelihood of continued cooperative endeavors. Smith (1975) notes one problem often involved in the formation of new collaborative settings is thinking "too grandly."

Another reason for starting small relates to comfort. Rogers and Farrow (1983), while discussing state strategies to promote interagency collaboration, suggest this type of collaboration may be the most effective when it starts with a limited scope and expands into other area only when the participants feel comfortable with their initial activities. In addition, collaborative efforts encounter less difficulties when they restrict their purposes to areas of overlap that exist between the institutions (Ladd, 1969).

Now exactly what is collaboration? According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language the term collaborate is defined as follows:

1. To work jointly especially with one or a limited number of others in a project involving composition or research to be jointly accredited.

2. To cooperate with or assist usually willingly an enemy of one's country.
3. To cooperate usually willingly with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected, often in some political or economic effort.

Note, according to the definition given, that one does not necessarily have to know or like the other party in order to collaborate. For example, during world war II we collaborated with Russia, although one could hardly say we were friends. Or take the case of two medieval knights who agree to fight to the death. Their match required collaboration, i.e., they did not start until the trumpet sounded, certain weapons were banned and the mode of fighting was agreed upon by both. In working, to solve the puzzle, you collaborated with one another and yet some were strangers to others.

It is interesting to note that knowledge cannot exist without collaboration. Unless we agree what words stand for which symbols - meaning does not exist. Becher (1962) noted that humans are the only animal able to assign meaning to things via symbols.

Why do people collaborate? According to Kimbal (1974), an anthropologist, the need to collaborate appears when:

1. there is a threat from outside
2. there is an identification of a common problem
3. there is a combination of the threat and the need to investigate the problem.

Drummond and Baker (1974) claim that normally an organization enters a collaborative venture only after its leaders realize that the organization cannot achieve what it wants to achieve, either as well or at all, by itself.

Now that we have examined elements essential to collaboration and have examined collaboration more closely, let us examine some of the items that hinder collaboration between universities and school districts. The following charts outline the findings of Edward Ladd of Emory University. During this presentation we will examine each area and present examples, from real settings, to illustrate the importance of each area.

Differences That May Hinder Collaboration

AREA	UNIVERSITY	SCHOOL DISTRICT
Research	Academically induced research Theory	Field induced research Concerned with day to day problems
Control	State	County
Policy Making	Lot of faculty involvement Extensive discussions Resent fast decisions	Decision making is centralized and therefore fairly rapid Most teachers lack experience in policy making
Learning	Start with learning	Start with learner
Evidence of learning	Mastery of a predetermined and systematic chunk of theoretical knowledge	Knows more at the end than at the beginning
Writing	Many memos Draft, tear apart, and rewrite with joy. Write formally and heavily	Few Memos Memos at the latter stages Breezy styles

Differences That May Hinder Collaboration 2

AREA	UNIVERSITY	SCHOOL DISTRICT
Personnel Matters	Few openings Extensive Search Usually hire from outside One to two day interview Low salary for highly qualified teachers and administrators	Many openings - one opening may create others Usually hire from within Brief interview Top pay for administrators
Commitment to Institution	Little obligation to give up independence to the institution Loyalty to the discipline Independent in dealings with institutions and with state and federal authorities.	Preserve and strengthen institution Rocking the boat - uncommon and frowned upon Public criticism, to be used by outside cities is taboo
Puhlic Criticism (Effect of)	Relatively immune	Extremely sensitive
Daily Activities	Control over ones own schedule A lot of interaction with colleagues. Able to meet during the day or days at a time. Enjoy sharp argument and disagreement.	Expected to be at their post during the day. Little interaction with colleagues Put off by remarks that show disapproval or sharp disagreement

Differences That May Hinder Collaboration 3

AREA	UNIVERSITY	SCHOOL DISTRICT
Expenditure of funds	More liberal about delegating authority to commit funds Approve expenditures that meet the spirit of the original plan	Few are approved to expend funds More cautious bout the justification of individual expenditures.
Problems of Elementary and Secondary Education	Study about the problems of Elementary and Secondary Education	Work directly and actively on the problems of Elementary and Secondary Education
Relative Status	Internal status tends to be nonlinear Difficult for outsiders to gauge Status does not relate to rank, salary, or nature of responsibility	Role relationships hierarchical status is clear and has a considerable limiting effect on communication Administrators recent pressures from below
Educational, political and social views	More critical of the educational, political and social status quo Tend to be more liberal	Representative of middle class Moderate to conservative

In closing why is collaboration important to education? Houston and Freiberg (1979) noted "perhaps the greatest issue facing professional education is the search for collaborative relationships which draw on the strengths of each institution in improving the performance of practitioners." (p. 9) Hechinger (1984) noted that unless the human dimension [the relationship between college and high school] is improved, all of the reform proposals will fail.

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